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**VISION**  
*of*  
*Sir Lunsford.*

*H. M. Caldwell Co.*  
*New York and Boston.*

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## The Vision of Sir Launfal



# The Vision of Sir Launfal

## PRELUDE TO PART FIRST

**O**VER his keys the musing organ-  
ist,  
Beginning doubtfully and far away,  
First lets his fingers wander as they  
list,  
And builds a bridge from Dream-  
land for his lay ;  
Then, as the touch of his loved instru-  
ment  
Gives hope and fervour, nearer draws  
his theme,  
First guessed by faint auroral flushes  
sent  
Along the wavering vista of his  
dream.

## ✻ The Vision of Sir Launfal

Not only around our infancy  
Doth heaven with all its splendours  
lie ;

Daily, with souls that cringe and plot,  
We Sinais climb and know it not ;

Over our manhood bend the skies ;  
Against our fallen and traitor lives  
The great winds utter prophecies ;  
With our faint hearts the mountain  
strives ;

Its arms outstretched, the druid wood  
Waits with its benedicite ;  
And to our age's drowsy blood  
Still shouts the inspiring sea.

Earth gets its price for what Earth  
gives us ;  
The beggar is taxed for a corner to  
die in,

## The Vision of Sir Launfal ❧

The priest hath his fee who comes and  
shrives us,

We bargain for the graves we lie in ;  
At the Devil's booth are all things  
sold,

Each ounce of dross costs its ounce of  
gold ;

For a cap and bells our lives we pay,  
Bubbles we earn with a whole soul's  
tasking :

'Tis heaven alone that is given  
away.

'Tis only God may be had for the  
asking ;

There is no price set on the lavish  
summer ;

And June may be had by the poorest  
comer.

And what is so rare as a day in June ?

Then, if ever, come perfect days ;

## ❖ The Vision of Sir Launfal

Then Heaven tries the earth if it be  
in tune,

And over it softly her warm ear  
lays :

Whether we look, or whether we  
listen,

We hear life murmur, or see it  
glisten ;

Every clod feels a stir of might,

An instinct within it that reaches  
and towers,

And, grasping blindly above it for  
light,

Climbs to a soul in grass and  
flowers ;

The flush of life may well be seen

Thrilling back over hills and valleys ;

The cowslip startles in meadows green,

The buttercup catches the sun in its  
chalice,



## The Vision of Sir Launfal ❧

And there's never a leaf or a blade too  
mean

To be some happy creature's palace ;  
The little bird sits at his door in the  
sun,

Atilt like a blossom among the leaves,  
And lets his illumined being o'errun

With the deluge of summer it re-  
ceives ;

His mate feels the eggs beneath her  
wings,

And the heart in her dumb breast  
flutters and sings ;

He sings to the wide world, and she to  
her nest, —

In the nice ear of Nature which song  
is the best ?

Now is the high-tide of the year,  
And whatever of life hath ebb'd away

## ✻ The Vision of Sir Launfal

Comes flooding back, with a ripply  
cheer,  
    Into every bare inlet and creek and  
    bay ;  
Now the heart is so full that a drop  
    overfills it,  
We are happy now because God so  
    wills it ;  
No matter how barren the past may  
    have been,  
'Tis enough for us now that the leaves  
    are green ;  
We sit in the warm shade and feel  
    right well  
How the sap creeps up and the blos-  
    soms swell ;  
We may shut our eyes, but we cannot  
    help knowing  
That skies are clear and grass is grow-  
    ing ;

## The Vision of Sir Launfal ❧

The breeze comes whispering in our ear,  
That dandelions are blossoming near,  
    That maize has sprouted, that  
    streams are flowing,  
That the river is bluer than the sky,  
That the robin is plastering his house  
    hard by ;  
And if the breeze kept the good news  
    back,  
For other couriers we should not lack ;  
    We could guess it all by yon heifer's  
    lowing, —  
And hark ! how clear bold chanticleer,  
Warmed with the new wine of the year,  
    Tells all in his lusty crowing !

Joy comes, grief goes, we know not  
    how ;  
Everything is happy now,  
    Everything is upward striving ;

## ❧ The Vision of Sir Launfal

'Tis as easy now for the heart to be true  
As for grass to be green or skies to be  
blue, —

'Tis the natural way of living :  
Who knows whither the clouds have  
fled ?

In the unscarred heaven they leave  
no wake ;  
And the eyes forget the tears they have  
shed,

The heart forgets its sorrow and ache ;  
The soul partakes the season's youth,  
And the sulphurous rifts of passion  
and woe

Lie deep 'neath a silence pure and  
smooth,

Like burnt-out craters healed with  
snow.

What wonder if Sir Launfal now  
Remembered the keeping of his vow ?

# The Vision of Sir Launfal ❧

## PART FIRST

### I.

“ My golden spurs now bring to me,  
And bring to me my richest mail,  
For to-morrow I go over land and  
sea

In search of the Holy Grail ;  
Shall never a bed for me be spread,  
Nor shall a pillow be under my head,  
Till I begin my vow to keep ;  
Here on the rushes will I sleep,  
And perchance there may come a vis-  
ion true

Ere day create the world anew.”

Slowly Sir Launfal's eyes grew  
dim,

Slumber fell like a cloud on him,  
And into his soul the vision flew.

## ❧ The Vision of Sir Launfal

### II.

The crows flapped over by twos and  
threes,  
In the pool drowsed the cattle up to  
their knees,  
The birds sang as if it were  
The one day of summer in all the  
year,  
And the very leaves seemed to sing on  
the trees :  
The castle alone in the landscape lay  
Like an outpost of winter, dull and  
gray ;  
'Twas the proudest hall in the North  
Countree,  
And never its gates might opened be,  
Save to lord or lady of high degree ;  
Summer besieged it on every side,

## The Vision of Sir Launfal ❧

But the churlish stone her assaults  
defied;  
She could not scale the chilly wall,  
Though around it for leagues her  
pavilions tall  
Stretched left and right,  
Over the hills and out of sight;  
Green and broad was every tent,  
And out of each a murmur went  
Till the breeze fell off at night.

### III.

The drawbridge dropped with a surly  
clang,  
And through the dark arch a charger  
sprang,  
Bearing Sir Launfal, the maiden knight,  
In his gilded mail, that flamed so  
bright

## ❧ The Vision of Sir Launfal

It seemed the dark castle had gathered all  
Those shafts the fierce sun had shot  
over its wall

In his siege of three hundred sum-  
mers long,  
And, binding them all in one blazing  
sheaf,  
Had cast them forth : so young and  
strong,  
And lightsome as a locust-leaf,  
Sir Launfal flashed forth in his un-  
scarred mail,  
To seek in all climes for the Holy Grail.

### IV.

It was morning on hill and stream  
and tree,  
And morning in the young knight's  
heart ;



## The Vision of Sir Launfal ❧

Only the castle moodily  
Rebuffed the gifts of the sunshine free.  
And gloomed by itself apart ;  
The season brimmed all other things up  
Full as the rain fills the pitcher-plant's  
cup.

v.

As Sir Launfal made morn through the  
darksome gate,  
He was ware of a leper, crouched by  
the same,  
Who begged with his hand and moaned  
as he sate ;  
And a loathing over Sir Launfal  
came ;  
The sunshine went out of his soul with  
a thrill,  
The flesh 'neath his armour did  
shrink and crawl,

## ❧ The Vision of Sir Launfal

And midway its leap his heart stood  
still

Like a frozen waterfall ;

For this man, so foul and bent of  
stature,

Rasped harshly against his dainty nature,  
And seemed the one blot on the sum-  
mer morn, —

So he tossed him a piece of gold in  
scorn.

### VI.

The leper raised not the gold from the  
dust :

“ Better to me the poor man’s crust,

Better the blessing of the poor,

Though I turn me empty from his  
door ;

That is no true alms which the hand  
can hold ;

## The Vision of Sir Launfal ❁

He gives nothing but worthless gold  
Who gives from a sense of duty ;  
But he who gives but a slender mite,  
And gives to that which is out of  
sight,  
That thread of the all-sustaining  
Beauty  
Which runs through all and doth all  
unite, —  
The hand cannot clasp the whole of  
his alms,  
The heart outstretches its eager palms,  
For a god goes with it and makes it  
store  
To the soul that was starving in dark-  
ness before.”

## ≡ The Vision of Sir Launfal

### PRELUDE TO PART SECOND

Down swept the chill wind from the  
mountain peak,  
From the snow five thousand sum-  
mers old ;  
On open wold and hill-top bleak  
It had gathered all the cold,  
And whirled it like sleet on the wan-  
derer's cheek ;  
It carried a shiver everywhere  
From the unleafed boughs and pas-  
tures bare ;  
The little brook heard and built a roof  
'Neath which he could house him win-  
ter-proof ;  
All night by the white stars' frosty gleams  
He groined his arches and matched his  
beams ;

## The Vision of Sir Launfal ❁

---

Slender and clear were his crystal spars  
As the lashes of light that trim the  
stars :

He sculptured every summer delight  
In his halls and chambers out of sight ;  
Sometimes his tinkling waters slipt  
Down through a frost-leaved forest-  
crypt,

Long, sparkling aisles of steel-stemmed  
trees

Bending to counterfeit a breeze ;  
Sometimes the roof no fretwork knew  
But silvery mosses that downward  
grew ;

Sometimes it was carved in sharp relief  
With quaint arabesques of ice-fern leaf ;  
Sometimes it was simply smooth and  
clear

For the gladness of heaven to shine  
through, and here

## ❖ The Vision of Sir Launfal

He had caught the nodding bulrush-tops  
And hung them thickly with diamond  
drops,

Which crystallised the beams of moon  
and sun,

And made a star of every one :

No mortal builder's most rare device  
Could match this winter-palace of ice ;  
'Twas as if every image that mirrored  
lay

In his depths serene through the sum-  
mer day,

Each flitting shadow of earth and sky,  
Lest the happy model should be lost,  
Had been mimicked in fairy masonry  
By the elfin builders of the frost.

Within the hall are song and laughter,  
The cheeks of Christmas glow red  
and jolly,

## The Vision of Sir Launfal ❧

And sprouting is every corbel and rafter  
    With lightsome green of ivy and  
    holly ;  
Through the deep gulf of the chimney  
    wide  
Wallows the Yule-log's roaring tide ;  
The broad flame-pennons droop and  
    flap  
    And belly and tug as a flag in the  
    wind :  
Like a locust shrills the imprisoned  
    sap,  
    Hunted to death in its galleries  
    blind ;  
And swift little troops of silent sparks,  
    Now pausing, now scattering away  
    as in fear,  
Go threading the soot-forest's tangled  
    darks  
    Like herds of startled deer.

## ❖ The Vision of Sir Launfal

But the wind without was eager and  
sharp,

Of Sir Launfal's gray hair it makes a  
harp,

And rattles and wrings

The ley strings,

Singing in dreary monotone,

A Christmas carol of its own,

Whose burden still, as he might  
guess,

Was — " Shelterless, shelterless, shel-  
terless ! "

The voice of the seneschal flared like  
a torch

As he shouted the wanderer away from  
the porch,

And he sat in the gateway and saw all  
night

The great hall-fire so cheery and  
bold,



## The Vision of Sir Launfal ❀

Through the window-slits of the  
castle old,  
Built out its piers of ruddy light  
Against the drift of the cold.

## ❧ The Vision of Sir Launfal

### PART SECOND

#### I.

There was never a leaf on bush or  
tree,  
The bare boughs rattled shudderingly ;  
The river was dumb and could not  
speak,  
For the frost's swift shuttles its  
shroud had spun ;  
A single crow on the tree-top bleak  
From his shining feathers shed off  
the cold sun ;  
Again it was morning, but shrunk and  
cold,  
As if her veins were sapless and old,  
And she rose up decrepitley  
For a last dim look at earth and  
sea.

## The Vision of Sir Launfal ❀

### II.

Sir Launfal turned from his own hard  
gate,  
For another heir in his earldom sate ;  
An old, bent man, worn out and frail,  
He came back from seeking the Holy  
Grail ;  
Little he recked of his earldom's loss,  
No more on his surcoat was blazoned  
the cross,  
But deep in his soul the sign he wore,  
The badge of the suffering and the poor.

### III.

Sir Launfal's raiment thin and spare  
Was idle mail 'gainst the barbèd air,  
For it was just at the Christmas time ;  
So he mused, as he sat, of a sunnier  
clime,

## ❖ The Vision of Sir Launfal

And sought for a shelter from cold and  
snow

In the light and warmth of long ago ;  
He sees the snake-like caravan crawl  
O'er the edge of the desert, black and  
small,

Then nearer and nearer, till one by  
one

He can count the camels in the sun,  
As over the red-hot sands they pass  
To where, in its slender necklace of  
grass,

The little spring laughed and leapt in  
the shade,

And with its own self like an infant  
played,

And waved its signal of palms.

## The Vision of Sir Launfal ❧

### IV.

“ For Christ’s sweet sake, I beg an  
alms ; ” —

The happy camels may reach the  
spring,

But Sir Launfal sees naught save the  
grewsome thing,

The leper, lank as the rain-blanchèd  
bone,

That cowers beside him, a thing as lone  
And white as the ice-isles of Northern  
seas

In the desolate horror of his disease.

### V.

And Sir Launfal said, — “ I behold in  
thee

An image of Him who died on the  
tree ;

## ❖ The Vision of Sir Launfal

Thou also hast had thy crown of  
thorns, —  
Thou also hast had the world's buffets  
and scorns, —  
And to thy life were not denied  
The wounds in the hands and feet and  
side :  
Mild Mary's Son, acknowledge me ;  
Behold, through him, I give to thee !”

### VI.

Then the soul of the leper stood up in  
his eyes  
And looked at Sir Launfal, and  
straightway he  
Remembered in what a haughtier guise  
He had flung an alms to leprosie,  
When he caged his young life up in  
gilded mail

## The Vision of Sir Launfal ❁

And set forth in search of the Holy Grail.  
The heart within him was ashes and  
dust ;  
He parted in twain his single crust,  
He broke the ice on the streamlet's  
brink,  
And gave the leper to eat and drink,  
'Twas a mouldy crust of coarse brown  
bread,  
'Twas water out of a wooden bowl,  
Yet with fine wheaten bread was the  
leper fed,  
And 'twas red wine he drank with  
his thirsty soul.

### VII.

As Sir Launfal mused with a downcast  
face,  
A light shone round about the place ;

## ❧ The Vision of Sir Launfal

The leper no longer crouched at his side,  
But stood before him glorified,  
Shining and tall and fair and straight  
As the pillar that stood by the Beautiful Gate, —  
Himself the Gate whereby men can  
Enter the temple of God in Man.

### VIII.

His words were shed softer than leaves  
from the pine,  
And they fell on Sir Launfal as snows  
on the brine,  
Which mingle their softness and quiet  
in one  
With the shaggy unrest they float  
down upon;  
And the voice that was calmer than  
silence said,



## The Vision of Sir Launfal ❧

“Lo it is I, be not afraid!  
In many climes, without avail,  
Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy  
    Grail;  
Behold, it is here,—this cup which thou  
Didst fill at the streamlet for me but  
    now;  
This crust is my body broken for thee,  
This water His blood that died on the  
    tree;  
The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,  
In whatso we share with another’s  
    need;  
Not what we give, but what we  
    share,—  
For the gift without the giver is bare;  
Who gives himself with his alms feeds  
    three,—  
Himself, his hungering neighbour, and  
    me.”

❖ The Vision of Sir Launfal

IX.

Sir Launfal awoke as from a swoond : —  
“ The Grail in my castle here is found !  
Hang my idle armour up on the wall,  
Let it be the spider’s banquet-hall ;  
He must be fenced with stronger mail  
Who would seek and find the Holy  
Grail.”

X.

The castle gate stands open now,  
And the wanderer is welcome to the  
hall  
As the hangbird is to the elm-tree  
bough ;  
No longer scowl the turrets tall,  
The summer’s long siege at last is o’er ;  
When the first poor outcast went in at  
the door,

## The Vision of Sir Launfal ❧

She entered with him in disguise,  
And mastered the fortress by surprise ;  
There is no spot she loves so well on  
    ground,  
She lingers and smiles there the whole  
    year round ;  
The meanest serf on Sir Launfal's  
    land  
Has hall and bower at his command ;  
And there's no poor man in the North  
    Countree  
But is lord of the earldom as much  
    as he.



## The Bobolink

**A**NACREON of the meadow,  
Drunk with the joy of spring!  
Beneath the tall pine's voiceful shadow  
I lie and drink thy jargonings;  
My soul is full with melodies,  
One drop would overflow it,  
And send the tears into mine eyes —  
But what carest thou to know it?  
Thy heart is free as mountain air,  
And of thy lays thou hast no care,  
Scattering them gayly everywhere,  
Happy, unconscious poet!

Upon a tuft of meadow grass,  
While thy loved-one tends the nest,  
Thou swayest as the breezes pass,  
Unburdening thine o'erfull breast

## ❖ The Bobolink

---

Of the crowded songs that fill it,  
Just as joy may choose to will it.  
Lord of thy love and liberty,  
The blithest bird of merry May,  
Thou turnest thy bright eye on me,  
That says as plain as eye can say —  
“ Here sit we in the sunny weather,  
I and my modest mate together ;  
Whatever your wise thoughts may be,  
Under that gloomy old pine-tree,  
We do not value them a feather.”

Now, leaving earth and me behind,  
Thou beatest up against the wind,  
Or, floating slowly down before it,  
Above thy grass-hid nest thou flutterest  
And thy bridal love-song utterest,  
Raining showers of music o'er it,  
Weary never, still thou trillest,  
Spring-glad some lays,

## The Bobolink ❀

As of moss-rimmed water brooks  
Murmuring through pebbly nooks  
In quiet summer days.  
My heart with happiness thou fillest,  
I seem again to be a boy  
Watching thee, gay, blithesome lover,  
O'er the bending grass-tops hover,  
Quivering thy wings for joy.  
There's something in the apple-blossom,  
The greening grass and bobolink's song,  
That wakes again within my bosom  
Feelings which have slumbered long.  
As long, long years ago I wandered,  
I seem to wander even yet.  
The hours the idle schoolboy squandered,  
The man would die ere he'd forget.  
O hours that frosty eld deemed wasted,  
Nodding his gray head toward my books,  
I dearer prize the lore I tasted

## ❧ The Bobolink

With you, among the trees and brooks,  
Than all that I have gained since then  
From learned books or study-withered  
men.

Nature, thy soul was one with mine,  
And, as a sister by a younger brother  
Is loved, each flowing to the other,  
Such love for me was thine.

Or wert thou not more like a gentle  
mother

With sympathy and loving power to  
heal,

Against whose heart my throbbing head  
I'd lay

And moan my childish sorrows all  
away,

Till calm and holiness would o'er me  
steal?

Was not the golden sunset a dear  
friend?



## The Bobolink ❧

Found I no kindness in the silent moon,  
And the green trees, whose tops did  
    sway and bend,

Low singing evermore their pleasant  
    tune?

Felt I no heart in dim and solemn  
    woods —

No loved-one's voice in lonely soli-  
    tudes!

Yes, yes! unhoodwinked then my  
    spirit's eyes,

Blind leaders had not *taught me* to be  
    wise.

Dear hours! which now again I  
    over-live,

Hearing and seeing with the ears and  
    eyes

Of childhood, ye were bees, that to the  
    hive

## ❧ The Bobolink

Of my young heart came laden with  
rich prize,  
Gathered in fields and woods and sunny  
dells, to be  
My spirit's food in days more wintery.  
Yea, yet again ye come! ye come!  
And, like a child once more at home  
After long sojourning in alien climes,  
I lie upon my mother's breast,  
Feeling the blessedness of rest,  
And dwelling in the light of other times.

O ye whose living is not *Life*,  
Whose dying is but death,  
Long, empty toil and petty strife,  
Rounded with loss of breath!  
Go, look on Nature's countenance,  
Drink in the blessing of her glance;  
Look on the sunset, hear the wind,  
The cataract, the awful thunder;

## The Bobolink ❧

Go, worship by the sea ;  
Then, and then only, shall ye find,  
With ever growing wonder,  
Man is not all in all to ye ;  
Go with a meek and humble soul,  
Then shall the scales of self unroll  
From off your eyes — the weary packs  
Drop from your heavy-laden backs ;  
And ye shall see,  
With reverent and hopeful eyes,  
Glowing with new-born energies,  
How great a thing it is to BE !



## My Love

**N**OT as all other women are  
Is she that to my soul is dear ;  
Her glorious fancies come from far  
Beneath the silver evening-star,  
And yet her heart is ever near.

Great feelings hath she of her own  
Which lesser souls may never know ;  
God giveth them to her alone,  
And sweet they are as any tone  
Wherewith the wind may choose to  
blow.

Yet in herself she dwelleth not,  
Although no home were half so fair ;  
No simplest duty is forgot,

✽ My Love

Life hath no dim and lonely spot  
That doth not in her sunshine share.

She doeth little kindnesses,  
Which most leave undone, or despise,  
For naught that sets one heart at ease,  
And giveth happiness or peace,  
Is low-esteemed in her eyes.

She hath no scorn of common things  
And, though she seem of other birth,  
Round us her heart entwines and clings,  
And patiently she folds her wings  
To tread the humble paths of earth.

Blessing she is : God made her so,  
And deeds of week-day holiness  
Fall from her noiseless as the snow,  
Nor hath she ever chanced to know  
That aught were easier than to bless.

## My Love ❀

She is most fair, and thereunto  
Her life doth rightly harmonise ;  
Feeling or thought that was not true  
Ne'er made less beautiful the blue  
Unclouded heaven of her eyes.

On Nature she doth muse and brood  
With such a still and love-clear eye —  
She is so gentle and so good —  
The very flowers in the wood  
Do bless her with their sympathy.

She is a woman : one in whom  
The spring-time of her childish years  
Hath never lost its fresh perfume,  
Though knowing well that life hath  
room  
For many blights and many tears.

And youth in her a home will find,  
Where he may dwell eternally ;

❧ My Love

Her soul is not of that weak kind  
Which better love the life behind  
Than that which is, or is to be.

I love her with a love as still  
As a broad river's peaceful might,  
Which, by high tower and lowly mill,  
Goes wandering at its own will,  
And yet doth ever flow aright.

And, on its full, deep breast serene,  
Like quiet isles my duties lie ;  
It flows around them and between,  
And makes them fresh and fair and  
green,  
Sweet homes wherein to live and die.



## The Beggar

A BEGGAR through the world am I,  
From place to place I wander  
by ; —

Fill up my pilgrim's scrip for me,  
For Christ's sweet sake and charity !

A little of thy steadfastness,  
Rounded with leafy gracefulness,  
Old oak, give me —  
That the world's blasts may round me  
blow,  
And I yield gently to and fro,  
While my stout-hearted trunk below  
And firm-set roots unmovèd be.

Some of thy stern, unyielding might,  
Enduring still through day and night

❖ The Beggar

Rude tempest-shock and withering  
    blight —  
That I may keep at bay  
The changeful April sky of chance  
And the strong tide of circumstance —  
Give me old granite gray.

    Some of thy mournfulness serene,  
Some of thy never-dying green,  
Put in this scrip of mine —  
That griefs may fall like snowflakes  
    light,  
And deck me in a robe of white  
Ready to be an angel bright —  
O sweetly-mournful pine.

    A little of thy merriment,  
Of thy sparkling, light content,  
Give me my cheerful brook —  
That I may still be full of glee

## The Beggar ❁

And gladsomeness, where'er I be,  
Though fickle fate hath prisoned me  
In some neglected nook.

Ye have been very kind and good  
To me, since I've been in the wood ;  
Ye have gone nigh to fill my heart,  
But good-bye, kind friends, every one,  
I've far to go ere set of sun ;  
Of all good things I would have part,  
The day was high ere I could start,  
And so my journey's scarce begun.

Heaven help me ! how could I for-  
get  
To beg of thee, dear violet !  
Some of thy modesty,  
That flowers here as well, unseen,  
As if before the world thou'dst been,  
O give, to strengthen me.



## The Sirens

**T**HE sea is lonely, the sea is dreary,  
The sea is restless and uneasy ;  
Thou seekest quiet, thou art weary.  
Wandering thou knowest not  
whither ; —

Our little isle is green and breezy,  
Come and rest thee ! O come hither,  
Come to this peaceful home of ours,  
Where evermore

The low west-wind creeps panting up  
the shore

To be at rest among the flowers ;  
Full of rest, the green moss lifts,  
As the dark waves of the sea  
Draw in and out of rocky rifts  
Calling solemnly to thee,

## ❖ The Sirens

With voices deep and hollow —

To the shore

Follow! O follow!

To be at rest for evermore!

For evermore!

Look how the gray, old Ocean

From the depths of his heart rejoices,

Heaving with a gentle motion,

When he hears our restful voices;

List how he sings in an undertone,

Chiming with our melody;

And all sweet sounds of earth and air

Melt into one low voice alone,

That murmurs over the weary sea —

And seems to sing from everywhere —

“Here mayest thou harbour peacefully,

Here mayest thou rest from the aching oar;

Turn thy curvèd prow ashore

## The Sirens ❧

And in our green isle rest for ever-  
more!

For evermore!"

And Echo half wakes in the wooded  
hill,

And, to her heart so calm and deep,  
Murmurs over in her sleep,

Doubtfully pausing and murmuring  
still,

"Evermore!"

Thus, on Life's weary sea,

Heareth the marinere

Voices sweet, from far and near,

Ever singing low and clear,

Ever singing longingly.

Is it not better here to be,

Than to be toiling late and soon?

In the dreary night to see

Nothing but the blood-red moon

Go up and down into the sea ;  
Or, in the loneliness of day,  
To see the still seals only,  
Solemnly lift their faces gray,  
Making it yet more lonely ?  
Is it not better, than to hear  
Only the sliding of the wave  
Beneath the plank, and feel so near  
A cold and lonely grave,  
A restless grave, where thou shalt  
lie  
Even in death unquietly ?  
Look down beneath thy wave-worn  
bark,  
Lean over the side and see  
The leaden eye of the side-long shark  
Upturned patiently  
Ever waiting there for thee :  
Look down and see those shapeless  
forms,



## The Sirens ❀

Which ever keep their dreamless  
sleep

Far down within the gloomy deep  
And only stir themselves in storms,  
Rising like islands from beneath,  
And snorting through the angry spray,  
As the frail vessel perisheth  
In the whirls of their unwieldy play ;

Look down ! Look down !

Upon the seaweed, slimy and dark,  
That waves its arms so lank and brown,  
Beckoning for thee !

Look down beneath thy wave-worn bark  
Into the cold depth of the sea !

Look down ! Look down !

Thus, on Life's lonely sea,  
Heareth the marinere

Voices sad from far and near,  
Ever singing full of fear,  
Ever singing drearily.

Here all is pleasant as a dream ;  
The wind scarce shaketh down the dew,  
The green grass floweth like a stream

Into the ocean's blue :

Listen ! O listen !

Here is a gush of many streams,  
A song of many birds,  
And every wish and longing seems  
Lulled to a numbered flow of  
words —

Listen ! O listen !

Here ever hum the golden bees  
Underneath full-blossomed trees,  
At once with glowing fruit and flower  
crowned ;  
The sand is so smooth, the yellow  
sand,  
That thy keel will not grate, as it  
touches the land ;  
All around, with a slumberous sound,

## The Sirens ❁

The singing waves slide up the strand,  
And there, where the smooth wet  
pebbles be,

The waters gurgle longingly,  
As if they fain would seek the shore,  
To be at rest from the ceaseless roar,  
To be at rest for evermore —

For evermore.

Thus on Life's gloomy sea,  
Hearst the marinere  
Voices sweet, far and near,  
Ever singing in his ear,  
“Here is rest and peace for thee!”



## Rhœcus

**G**OD sends his teachers unto every  
age,

To every clime, and every race of men,  
With revelations fitted to their growth  
And shape of mind, nor gives the realm  
of Truth

Into the selfish rule of one sole race :  
Therefore each form of worship that  
hath swayed

The life of man, and given it to grasp  
The master-key of knowledge, rever-  
ence,

Enfolds some germs of goodness and of  
right ;

Else never had the eager soul, which  
loathes

The slothful down of pampered igno-  
 rance,  
 Found in it even a moment's fitful rest.

There is an instinct in the human  
 heart  
 Which makes that all the fables it  
 hath coined,  
 To justify the reign of its belief  
 And strengthen it by beauty's right  
 divine,  
 Veil in their inner cells a mystic gift,  
 Which, like the hazel twig, in faithful  
 hands,  
 Points surely to the hidden springs of  
 truth.  
 For, as in nature naught is made in  
 vain,  
 But all things have within their hull of  
 use

Rhœcus ❁

A wisdom and a meaning which may  
    speak  
Of spiritual secrets to the ear  
Of spirit ; so, in whatsoe'er the heart  
Hath fashioned for a solace to itself,  
To make its inspirations suit its creed,  
And from the niggard hands of falsehood wring  
    hood wring  
Its needful food of truth, there ever is  
A sympathy with Nature, which reveals,  
Not less than her own works, pure  
    gleams of light  
And earnest parables of inward lore.  
Hear now this fairy legend of old  
    Greece,  
As full of freedom, youth and beauty  
    still  
As the immortal freshness of that grace  
Carved for all ages on some Attic frieze.

A youth named Rhœcus, wandering  
 in the wood,  
 Saw an old oak just trembling to its  
 fall,  
 And feeling pity of so fair a tree,  
 He propped its gray trunk with admir-  
 ing care,  
 And with a thoughtless footstep loitered  
 on.  
 But, as he turned, he heard a voice  
 behind  
 That murmured, "Rhœcus!" 'Twas  
 as if the leaves,  
 Stirred by a passing breath, had mur-  
 mured it,  
 And, while he paused bewildered, yet  
 again  
 It murmured, "Rhœcus!" softer than  
 a breeze.  
 He started and beheld with dizzy eyes



## Rhœcus ❁

What seemed the substance of a happy  
dream  
Stand there before him, spreading a  
warm glow  
Within the green glooms of the shadowy oak.  
It seemed a woman's shape, yet all too  
fair  
To be a woman, and with eyes too  
meek  
For any that were wont to mate with  
gods.  
All naked like a goddess stood she there,  
And like a goddess all too beautiful  
To feel the guilt-born earthliness of  
shame.  
"Rhœcus, I am the Dryad of this  
tree,"  
Thus she began, dropping her low-  
toned words

Serene, and full, and clear, as drops  
of dew,  
“ And with it I am doomed to live and  
die ;  
The rain and sunshine are my caterers,  
Nor have I other bliss than simple  
life ;  
Now ask me what thou wilt, that I can  
give,  
And with a thankful joy it shall be  
thine.”

Then Rhœcus, with a flutter at the  
heart,  
Yet, by the promptings of such beauty,  
bold,  
Answered : “ What is there that can  
satisfy  
The endless craving of the soul but  
love ?

Rhœcus ❧

Give me thy love, or but the hope of  
that

Which must be evermore my spirit's  
goal."

After a little pause she said again,  
But with a glimpse of sadness in her  
tone,

"I give it, Rhœcus, though a perilous  
gift;

An hour before the sunset meet me  
here."

And straightway there was nothing he  
could see

But the green glooms beneath the  
shadowy oak,

And not a sound came to his straining  
ears

But the low trickling rustle of the leaves,  
And far away upon an emerald slope  
The falter of an idle shepherd's pipe.

Now in those days of simpleness and  
 faith,  
 Men did not think that happy things  
 were dreams  
 Because they overstepped the narrow  
 bourne  
 Of likelihood, but reverently deemed  
 Nothing too wondrous or too beauti-  
 ful  
 To be the guerdon of a daring  
 heart.  
 So Rhæcus made no doubt that he was  
 blest,  
 And all along unto the city's gate  
 Earth seemed to spring beneath him as  
 he walked,  
 The clear, broad sky looked bluer than  
 its wont,  
 And he could scarce believe he had not  
 wings,

## Rhœcus ❧

Such sunshine seemed to glitter through  
his veins  
Instead of blood, so light he felt and  
strange.

Young Rhœcus had a faithful heart  
enough,  
But one that in the present dwelt too  
much,  
And, taking with blithe welcome what-  
soe'er  
Chance gave of joy, was wholly bound  
in that,  
Like the contented peasant of a vale,  
Deemed it the world, and never looked  
beyond.  
So haply meeting in the afternoon  
Some comrades who were playing at  
the dice,  
He joined them, and forgot all else beside.

The dice were rattling at the merri-  
 est,  
 And Rhœcus, who had met but sorry  
 luck,  
 Just laughed in triumph at a happy  
 throw,  
 When through the room there hummed  
 a yellow bee  
 That buzzed about his ear with down-  
 drooped legs  
 As if to light. And Rhœcus laughed  
 and said,  
 Feeling how red and flushed he was  
 with loss,  
 “By Venus! does he take me for a  
 rose?”  
 And brushed him off with rough, im-  
 patient hand,  
 But still the bee came back, and thrice  
 again,

## Rhæcus ❁

Rhæcus did beat him off with growing  
wrath.

Then through the window flew the  
wounded bee,

And Rhæcus, tracking him with angry  
eyes,

Saw a sharp mountain-peak of Thessaly  
Against the red disk of the setting  
sun, —

And instantly the blood sank from his  
heart,

As if its very walls had caved away.

Without a word, he turned, and, rush-  
ing forth,

Ran madly through the city and the gate,  
And o'er the plain, which now the  
wood's long shade,

By the low sun thrown forward broad  
and dim,

Darkened well-nigh unto the city's wall.

Quite spent and out of breath he  
     reached the tree,  
 And, listening fearfully, he heard once  
     more  
 The low voice murmur "Rhœcus!"  
     close at hand;  
 Whereat he looked around him, but  
     could see  
 Naught but the deepening glooms be-  
     neath the oak.  
 Then sighed the voice, "O Rhœcus!  
     nevermore  
 Shalt thou behold me or by day or  
     night,  
 Me, who would fain have blessed thee  
     with a love  
 More ripe and bounteous than ever yet  
 Filled up with nectar any mortal heart:  
 But thou didst scorn my humble mes-  
     senger,



Rhœcus ❁

And sent'st him back to me with  
    bruised wings,  
We spirits only show to gentle eyes,  
We ever ask an undivided love,  
And he who scorns the least of Nature's  
    works  
Is thenceforth exiled and shut out from  
    all,  
Farewell! for thou canst never see me  
    more!"

Then Rhœcus beat his breast, and  
    groaned aloud,  
And cried, "Be pitiful! forgive me  
    yet  
This once, and I shall never need it  
    more?"  
"Alas!" the voice returned, "'tis thou  
    art blind,  
Not I unmerciful; I can forgive,

But have no skill to heal thy spirit's  
eyes ;

Only the soul hath power o'er itself."

With that again there murmured  
"Nevermore !"

And Rhœcus after heard no other  
sound,

Except the rattling of the oak's crisp  
leaves,

Like the long surf upon a distant  
shore,

Raking the sea-worn pebbles up and  
down.

The night had gathered round him ;  
o'er the plain

The city sparkled with its thousand  
lights,

And sounds of revel fell upon his ear  
Harshly and like a curse ; above, the  
sky,

## Rhœcus ❧

With all its bright sublimity of stars,  
Deepened and on his forehead smote  
the breeze :

Beauty was all around him and de-  
light,

But from that eve he was alone on  
earth.

So in our youth we shape out noble  
ends,

And worship beauty with such earnest  
faith

As but the young, unwasted heart can  
know,

And, haply wandering into some good  
deed,

Win for our souls a moment's sight of  
Truth.

Then the sly world runs up to us and  
smiles,

And takes us by the hand and cries,  
 “ Well met !

Come play with me at dice ; one lucky  
 throw,

And all my power and glory shall be  
 thine ;

Stake but thy heart upon the other  
 side ! ”

So we turn gaily in, and by degrees  
 Lose all our nature’s broad inheri-  
 tance, —

The happiness content with homely  
 things, —

The wise simplicity of honest faith, —

The unsuspecting gentleness of  
 heart, —

The open-handed grace of Charity, —

The love of Beauty, and the deathless  
 hope

To be her chosen almoner on earth.

## Rhœcus ❧

And we rise up at last with wrinkled  
brows,  
Most deeply-learned in the hollow  
game  
At which we now have nothing left  
to stake,  
Albeit too wise to stake it, if we had.

But Truth will never let the heart  
alone  
That once hath sought her, sending  
o'er and o'er  
Her sweet and unreprouchful messen-  
gers  
To lure us back again and give us  
all,  
Which we, all fresh and burning in  
the game,  
Wherein we lose and lose with seem-  
ing gain,

Brush off impatiently with sharp re-  
 buff,  
 Feeling our better instincts now no  
 more  
 But as reproaches lacking other aim  
 Than to abridge our little snatch of  
 bliss,  
 And, when we rouse at length, and  
 feel within  
 The stirring of our ancient love  
 again,  
 Our eyes are blinded that we cannot  
 see  
 The fair benignity of unveiled Truth  
 That plighted us its holy troth ere-  
 while  
 Our sun is setting. We are just too  
 late;  
 And so, instead of lightening by our  
 lives

Rhœcus ❧

The general burden of our drooping  
kind —

Instead of being named in aftertime  
With grateful reverence as men who  
talked

With spirits, and the dreaded secret  
wrung

From out the loath lips of the sphinx  
of life, —

Instead of being, as all true men may,  
Part of the memory of all great deeds,  
The inspiration of all time to come,  
We linger to our graves with empty  
hearts,

And add our little handful to the soil  
As valueless and frail as fallen leaves.





## An Indian-summer Reverie

WHAT visionary tints the  
year puts on,  
When falling leaves falter through  
motionless air  
Or numbly cling and shiver to be  
gone!  
How shimmer the low flats and  
pastures bare,  
As with her nectar Hebe Autumn  
fills  
The bowl between me and those  
distant hills,  
And smiles and shakes abroad her misty,  
tremulous hair!

## ❖ An Indian-summer Reverie

No more the landscape holds its  
wealth apart,  
Making me poorer in my poverty,  
But mingles with my senses and  
my heart ;  
My own projected spirit seems to  
me  
In her own reverie the world to  
steep ;  
'Tis she that waves to sympathetic  
sleep,  
Moving, as she is moved, each field  
and hill and tree.

How fuse and mix, with what  
unfelt degrees,  
Clasped by the faint horizon's lan-  
guid arms,  
Each into each, the hazy dis-  
tances !

So

## An Indian-summer Reverie ❁

The softened season all the land-  
scape charms ;  
Those hills, my native village that  
embay,  
In waves of dreamier purple roll  
away,  
And floating in mirage seem all the  
glimmering farms.

Far distant sounds the hidden  
chickadee  
Close at my side ; far distant sound  
the leaves ;  
The fields seem fields of dream,  
where Memory  
Wanders like gleaning Ruth ; and  
as the sheaves  
Of wheat and barley wavered in  
the eye

❧ An Indian-summer Reverie

Of Boaz as the maiden's glow  
went by,  
So tremble and seem remote all things  
the sense receives.

The cock's shrill trump that tells  
of scattered corn,  
Passed breezily on by all his flapping  
mates,  
Faint and more faint, from barn  
to barn is borne,  
Southward, perhaps to far Magellan's  
Straits ;  
Dimly I catch the throb of distant  
flails ;  
Silently overhead the hen-hawk  
sails,  
With watchful, measuring eye, and for  
his quarry waits.

## An Indian-summer Reverie ❀

The sobered robin, hunger-silent  
now,  
Seeks cedar-berries blue, his autumn  
cheer ;  
The squirrel, on the shingly shag-  
bark's bough,  
Now saws, now lists with downward  
eye and ear,  
Then drops his nut, and with a  
chipping bound  
Whisks to his winding fastness  
underground ;  
The clouds like swans drift down the  
streaming atmosphere.

O'er yon bare knoll the pointed  
cedar shadows  
Drowse on the crisp, gray moss ; the  
ploughman's call

❖ An Indian-summer Reverie

Creeps faint as smoke from black,  
fresh-furrowed meadows ;  
The single crow a single caw lets fall ;  
And all around me every bush and  
tree  
Says Autumn's here, and Winter  
soon will be,  
Who snows his soft, white sleep and  
silence over all.

The birch, most shy and ladylike  
of trees,  
Her poverty, as best she may, re-  
trieves,  
And hints at her foregone gentili-  
ties  
With some saved relics of her wealth  
of leaves ;  
The swamp-oak, with his royal  
purple on,

## An Indian-summer Reverie ❀

Glares red as blood across the  
sinking sun,  
As one who prouder to a falling fortune  
cleaves.

He looks a sachem, in red blanket  
wrapt,  
Who, mid some council of the sad-  
garbed whites,  
Erect and stern, in his own memo-  
ries lapt,  
With distant eye broods over other  
sights,  
Sees the hushed wood the city's  
flare replace,  
The wounded turf heal o'er the  
railway's trace,  
And roams the savage Past of his un-  
dwindled rights.

❖ An Indian-summer Reverie

The red-oak, softer-grained, yields  
all for lost,  
And, with his crumpled foliage stiff  
and dry,  
After the first betrayal of the  
frost,  
Rebuffs the kiss of the relenting sky ;  
The chestnuts, lavish of their long-  
hid gold,  
To the faint summer, beggared  
now and old,  
Pour back the sunshine hoarded 'neath  
her favouring eye.

The ash her purple drops forgiv-  
ingly  
And sadly, breaking not the general  
hush ;  
The maple-swamps glow like a  
sunset sea,



## An Indian-summer Reverie ❧

Each leaf a ripple with its separate  
flush ;  
And round the wood's edge creeps  
the skirting blaze  
Of bushes low, as when on cloudy  
days,  
Ere the rain falls, the cautious farmer  
burns his brush.

O'er yon low wall, which guards  
one unkempt zone,  
Where vines and weeds and scrub-  
oaks intertwine  
Safe from the plough, whose  
rough, discordant stone  
Is massed to one soft gray by lichens  
fine,  
The tangled blackberry, crossed  
and recrossed, weaves

## ❧ An Indian-summer Reverie

A prickly network of ensanguined  
leaves ;  
Hard by, with coral beads, the prim  
black-alders shine.

Pillaring with flame this crum-  
bling boundary,  
Whose loose blocks topple 'neath the  
ploughboy's foot,  
Who, with each sense shut fast  
except the eye,  
Creeps close and scares the jay he  
hoped to shoot,  
The woodbine up the elm's  
straight stem aspires,  
Coiling it, harmless, with au-  
tumnal fires ;  
In the ivy's paler blaze the martyr oak  
stands mute.

## An Indian-summer Reverie ❀

Below, the Charles — a strip of  
nether sky,  
Now hid by rounded apple-trees  
between,  
Whose gaps the misplaced sail  
sweeps bellying by,  
Now flickering golden through a  
woodland screen,  
Then spreading out, at his next  
turn beyond,  
A silver circle like an inland  
pond —  
Slips seaward silently through marshes  
purple and green.

Dear marshes! vain to him the  
gift of sight  
Who cannot in their various incomes  
share,

✽: An Indian-summer Reverie

From every season drawn, of shade  
and light,  
Who sees in them but levels brown  
and bare ;  
Each change of storm or sunshine  
scatters free  
On them its largess of variety,  
For Nature with cheap means still  
works her wonders rare.

In Spring they lie one broad ex-  
panse of green,  
O'er which the light winds run with  
glimmering feet :  
Here, yellower stripes track out  
the creek unseen,  
There, darker growths o'er hidden  
ditches meet ;  
And purpler stains show where  
the blossoms crowd,

## An Indian-summer Reverie ❁

As if the silent shadow of a  
cloud  
Hung there becalmed, with the next  
breath to fleet.

All round, upon the river's slippery  
edge,  
Witching to deeper calm the drowsy  
tide,  
Whispers and leans the breeze-  
entangling sedge;  
Through emerald glooms the linger-  
ing waters slide,  
Or, sometimes wavering, throw  
back the sun,  
And the stiff banks in eddies melt  
and run  
Of dimpling light, and with the current  
seem to glide.

## ❧ An Indian-summer Reverie

In Summer 'tis a blithesome sight  
to see,  
As, step by step, with measured  
swing, they pass,  
The wide-ranked mowers wading  
to the knee,  
Their sharp scythes panting through  
the thick set grass ;  
Then, stretched beneath a rick's  
shade in a ring,  
The'r nooning take, while one  
begins to sing  
A stave that droops and dies 'neath the  
close sky of brass.

Meanwhile that devil-may-care,  
the bobolink,  
Remembering duty, in mid-quaver  
stops

## An Indian-summer Reverie ❁

Just ere he sweeps o'er rapture's  
tremulous brink,  
And 'twixt the winrows most de-  
murely drops,  
A decorous bird of business, who  
provides  
For his brown mate and fledglings  
six besides,  
And looks from right to left, a farmer  
mid his crops.

Another change subdues them in  
the Fall,  
But saddens not; they still show  
merrier tints,  
Though sober russet seems to  
cover all;  
When the first sunshine through  
their dew-drops glints,

❧ An Indian-summer Reverie

Look how the yellow clearness,  
streamed across,  
Redeems with rarer hues the  
season's loss,  
As Dawn's feet there had touched and  
left their rosy prints.

Or come when sunset gives its  
freshened zest,  
Lean o'er the bridge and let the  
ruddy thrill,  
While the shorn sun swells down  
the hazy west,  
Glow opposite ; — the marshes drink  
their fill  
And swoon with purple veins,  
then slowly fade  
Through pink to brown, as east-  
ward moves the shade,



## An Indian-summer Reverie ❀

Lengthening with stealthy creep, of  
Simond's darkening hill.

Later, and yet ere Winter wholly  
shuts,  
Ere through the first dry snow the  
runner grates,  
And the loath cart-wheel screams  
in slippery ruts,  
While firmer ice the eager boy  
awaits,  
Trying each buckle and strap be-  
side the fire,  
And until bedtime plays with his  
desire,  
Twenty times putting on and off his  
new-bought skates; —

## ❧ An Indian-summer Reverie

Then, every morn, the river's  
banks shine bright  
With smooth plate-armour, treacher-  
ous and frail,  
By the frost's clinking hammers  
forged at night,  
'Gainst which the lances of the sun  
prevail,  
Giving a pretty emblem of the  
day  
When guiltier arms in light shall  
melt away,  
And states shall move free-limbed,  
loosed from war's cramping  
mail.

And now those waterfalls the  
ebbing river  
Twice every day creates on either  
side

## An Indian-summer Reverie ❁

Tinkle, as through their fresh-  
sparred grots they shiver  
In grass-arched channels to the sun  
denied ;  
High flaps in sparkling blue the  
far-heard crow,  
The silvered flats gleam frostily  
below,  
Suddenly drops the gull and breaks the  
glassy tide.

But crowned in turn by vying  
seasons three,  
Their winter halo hath a fuller ring ;  
This glory seems to rest immov-  
ably, —  
The others were too fleet and vanish-  
ing ;  
When the hid tide is at its high-  
est flow,

❧ An Indian-summer Reverie

O'er marsh and stream one breath-  
less trance of snow  
With brooding fulness awes and hushes  
everything.

The sunshine seems blown off by  
the bleak wind,  
As pale as formal candles lit by  
day ;  
Gropes to the sea the river dumb  
and blind ;  
The brown ricks, snow-thatched by  
the storm in play,  
Show pearly breakers combing o'er  
their lee,  
White crests as of some just  
enchanted sea,  
Checked in their maddest leap and  
hanging poised midway.

## An Indian-summer Reverie ❁

But when the eastern blow, with  
rain aslant,  
From mid-sea's prairies green and  
rolling plains  
Drives in his wallowing herds of  
billows gaunt,  
And the roused Charles remembers  
in his veins  
Old Ocean's blood and snaps his  
gyves of frost,  
That tyrannous silence on the  
shores is tost  
In dreary wreck, and crumbling desola-  
tion reigns.

Edgewise or flat, in Druid-like  
device,  
With leaden pools between or gullies  
bare,

❖ ❖ ❖ An Indian-summer Reverie

The blocks lie strewn, a bleak  
Stonehenge of ice ;  
No life, no sound, to break the grim  
despair,  
Save sullen plunge, as through the  
sedges stiff  
Down crackles riverward some  
thaw-sapped cliff,  
Or when the close-wedged fields of ice  
crunch here and there.

But let me turn from fancy-pic-  
tured scenes  
To that whose pastoral calm before  
me lies :  
Here nothing harsh or rugged in-  
tervenes ;  
The early evening with her misty dyes  
Smooths off the ravelled edges of  
the nigh,

## An Indian-summer Reverie ❀

Relieves the distant with her  
cooler sky,  
And tones the landscape down, and  
soothes the wearied eyes.

There gleams my native village,  
dear to me,  
Though higher change's waves each  
day are seen,  
Whelming fields famed in boy-  
hood's history,  
Sanding with houses the diminished  
green ;  
There, in red brick, which soften-  
ing time defies,  
Stand square and stiff the Muses'  
factories ; —  
How with my life knit up is every  
well-known scene !

## ❖ An Indian-summer Reverie

Flow on, dear river ! not alone you  
flow  
To outward sight, and through your  
marshes wind ;  
Fed from the mystic springs of  
long-ago,  
Your twin flows silent through my  
world of mind :  
Grow dim, dear marshes, in the  
evening's gray !  
Before my inner sight ye stretch  
away,  
And will for ever, though these fleshly  
eyes grow blind.

Beyond the hillock's house-be-  
spotted swell,  
Where Gothic chapels house the  
horse and chaise,



## An Indian-summer Reverie ❁

Where quiet sits in Grecian temples dwell,  
Where Coptic tombs resound with prayer and praise,  
Where dust and mud the equal year divide,  
There gentle Allston lived, and wrought, and died,  
Transfiguring street and shop with his illumined gaze.

*Virgilium vidi tantum*, — I have seen  
But as a boy, who looks alike on all,  
That misty hair, that fine Undine-like mien,  
Tremulous as down to feeling's faintest call; —  
Ah, dear old homestead! count it to thy fame

❖ An Indian-summer Reverie

That thither many times the  
Painter came ; —  
One elm yet bears his name, a feathery  
tree and tall.

Swiftly the present fades in mem-  
ory's glow, —  
Our only sure possession is the  
past ;  
The village blacksmith died a  
month ago,  
And dim to me the forge's roaring  
blast ;  
Soon fire-new mediævals we shall  
see  
Oust the black smithy from its  
chestnut-tree,  
And that hewn down, perhaps, the  
beehive green and vast.

## An Indian-summer Reverie ❀

How many times, prouder than  
king on throne,  
Loosed from the village school-dame's  
A's and B's,  
Panting have I the creaky bellows  
blown,  
And watched the pent volcano's red  
increase,  
Then paused to see the ponderous  
sledge, brought down  
By that hard arm voluminous and  
brown,  
From the white iron swarm its golden  
vanishing bees.

Dear native town ! whose choking  
elms each year  
With eddying dust before their time  
turn gray,

❧ An Indian-summer Reverie

Pining for rain, — to me thy dust  
is dear ;  
It glorifies the eve of summer day,  
And when the westering sun half  
sunken burns,  
The mote-thick air to deepest  
orange turns,  
The westward horseman rides through  
clouds of gold away.

So palpable, I've seen those un-  
shorn few,  
The six old willows at the causey's  
end  
(Such trees Paul Potter never  
dreamed nor drew),  
Through this dry mist their checker-  
ing shadows send,  
Striped, here and there, with many  
a long-drawn thread,

## An Indian-summer Reverie ❀

Where streamed through leafy  
chinks the trembling red,  
Past which, in one bright trail, the  
hangbird's flashes blend.

Yes, dearer far thy dust than all  
that e'er,  
Beneath the awarded crown of vic-  
tory,  
Gilded the blown Olympic chari-  
oteer ;  
Though lightly prized the ribboned  
parchments three,  
Yet *collegisse juvat*, I am glad  
That here what colleging was  
mine I had, —  
It linked another tie, dear native town,  
with thee !

❧ An Indian-summer Reverie

Nearer art thou than simply native  
earth,  
My dust with thine concedes a deeper  
tie ;  
A closer claim thy soil may well  
put forth,  
Something of kindred more than  
sympathy ;  
For in thy bounds I reverently  
laid away  
That blinding anguish of forsaken  
clay,  
That title I seemed to have in earth  
and sea and sky,

That portion of my life more  
choice to me  
(Though brief, yet in itself so round  
and whole)

## An Indian-summer Reverie ❀

Than all the imperfect residue can  
be ; —

The Artist saw his statue of the soul  
Was perfect ; so, with one regret-  
ful stroke,

The earthen model into frag-  
ments broke,

And without her the impoverished  
seasons roll.





## The Birch-tree

**R**IPPLING through thy branches  
goes the sunshine,  
Among thy leaves that palpitate for ever,  
Ovid in thee a pining Nymph had  
    prisoned,  
The soul once of some tremulous in-  
    land river,  
Quivering to tell her woe, but ah!  
    dumb, dumb for ever!

While all the forest, witched with  
    slumberous moonshine,  
Holds up its leaves in happy, happy  
    silence,  
Waiting the dew, with breath and pulse  
    suspended,

## ≡ The Birch-tree

I hear afar thy whispering, gleamy  
islands,  
And track thee wakeful still amid the  
wide-hung silence.

Upon the brink of some wood-nestled  
lakelet,  
Thy foliage, like the tresses of a  
Dryad,  
Dripping round thy slim, white stem,  
whose shadow  
Slopes quivering down the water's  
dusky quiet,  
Thou shrink'st as on her bath's edge  
would some startled Dryad.

Thou art the go-between of rustic  
lovers ;  
Thy white bark has their secrets in its  
keeping ;

## The Birch-tree ❧

Reuben writes here the happy name of  
    Patience,  
And thy lithe boughs hang murmuring  
    and weeping  
Above her, as she steals the mystery  
    from thy keeping.

Thou art to me like my belovèd maiden,  
So frankly coy, so full of trembly con-  
    fidences ;  
Thy shadow scarce seems shade, thy  
    pattering leaflets  
Sprinkle their gathered sunshine o'er  
    my senses,  
And Nature gives me all her summer  
    confidences.

Whether my heart with hope or sorrow  
    tremble,  
Thou sympathisest still ; wild and un-  
    quiet,

❧ The Birch-tree

I fling me down ; thy ripple, like a river,  
Flows valleyward, where calmness is,  
    and by it  
My heart is floated down into the land  
    of quiet.

## The Changeling

I HAD a little daughter,  
And she was given to me  
To lead me gently backward  
To the Heavenly Father's knee,  
That I, by the force of nature,  
Might in some dim wise divine  
The depth of his infinite patience  
To this wayward soul of mine.

I know not how others saw her,  
But to me she was wholly fair,  
And the light of the heaven she came  
from  
Still lingered and gleamed in her hair ;  
For it was as wavy and golden,  
And as many changes took,

## ❧ The Changeling

As the shadows of sun-gilt ripples  
On the yellow bed of a brook.

To what can I liken her smiling  
Upon me, her kneeling lover,  
How it leaped from her lips to her  
eyelids,  
And dimpled her wholly over,  
Till her outstretched hands smiled  
also,  
And I almost seemed to see  
The very heart of her mother  
Sending sun through her veins to  
me!

She had been with us scarce a twelve-  
month,  
And it hardly seemed a day,  
When a troop of wandering angels  
Stole my little daughter away ;

## The Changeling ❧

Or perhaps those heavenly Zingari  
But loosed the hampering strings,  
And when they had opened her cage-  
door,  
My little bird used her wings.

But they left in her stead a changeling,  
A little angel child,  
That seems like her bud in full blos-  
som,  
And smiles as she never smiled :  
When I wake in the morning, I see it  
Where she always used to lie,  
And I feel as weak as a violet  
Alone 'neath the awful sky.

As weak, yet as trustful also ;  
For the whole year long I see  
All the wonders of faithful Nature  
Still worked for the love of me ;

## ❖ The Changeling

Winds wander, and dews drip earth-  
ward,  
Rain falls, suns rise and set,  
Earth whirls, and all but to prosper  
A poor little violet.

This child is not mine as the first was,  
I cannot sing it to rest,  
I cannot lift it up fatherly  
And bliss it upon my breast ;  
Yet it lies in my little one's cradle  
And sits in my little one's chair,  
And the light of the heaven she's gone to  
Transfigures its golden hair.



## To the Dandelion

**D**EAR common flower, that grow'st  
beside the way,  
Fringing the dusty road with harmless  
gold,  
First pledge of blithesome May,  
Which children pluck, and, full of  
pride, uphold,  
High-hearted buccaneers, o'erjoyed that  
they  
An Eldorado in the grass have found,  
Which not the rich earth's ample  
round  
May match in wealth — thou art more  
dear to me  
Than all the prouder Summer-blooms  
may be.

✻ To the Dandelion

Gold such as thine ne'er drew the  
Spanish prow  
Through the primeval hush of Indian  
seas,  
Nor wrinkled the lean brow  
Of age, to rob the lover's heart of ease ;  
'Tis the Spring's largess, which she  
scatters now  
To rich and poor alike, with lavish  
hand,  
Though most hearts never under-  
stand  
To take it at God's value, but pass by  
The offered wealth with unrewarded  
eye.

Thou art my tropics and mine Italy ;  
To look at thee unlocks a warmer  
clime ;  
The eyes thou givest me

## To the Dandelion ❀

Are in the heart and heed not space or  
time :

Not in mid June the golden-cuirassed  
bee

Feels a more Summer-like, warm rav-  
ishment

In the white lily's breezy tent,  
His conquered Sybaris, than I, when  
first

From the dark green thy yellow circles  
burst.

Then think I of deep shadows in the  
grass, —

Of meadows where in sun the cattle  
graze,

Where as the breezes pass,  
The gleaming rushes lean a thousand  
ways, —

Of leaves that slumber in a cloudy mass,

❧ To the Dandelion

Or whiten in the wind,— of waters  
blue  
That from the distance sparkle  
through  
Some woodland gap,— and of a sky  
above  
Where one white cloud like a stray  
lamb doth move.

My childhood's earliest thoughts are  
linked with thee ;  
The sight of thee calls back the robin's  
song,  
Who from the dark old tree  
Beside the door, sang clearly all day  
long,  
And I, secure in childish piety,  
Listened as if I heard an angel sing  
With news from Heaven, which he  
did bring

## To the Dandelion ❀

Fresh every day to my untainted ears,  
When birds and flowers and I were  
happy peers.

How like a prodigal doth nature seem,  
When thou, for all thy gold, so com-  
mon art!

Thou teachest me to deem  
More sacredly of every human heart,  
Since each reflects in joy its scanty  
gleam

Of Heaven, and could some wondrous  
secret show,

Did we but pay the love we owe,  
And with a child's undoubting wisdom  
look

On all these living pages of God's  
book.



## The Shepherd of King Admetus

**T**HERE came a youth upon the  
earth,

Some thousand years ago,  
Whose slender hands were nothing  
worth,

Whether to plough, or reap, or sow.

He made a lyre, and drew therefrom  
Music so strange and rich,  
That all men loved to hear, — and some  
Muttered of fagots for a witch.

But King Admetus, one who had  
Pure taste by right divine,  
Decreed his singing not too bad  
To hear between the cups of wine :

## ❖ The Shepherd of

And so, well-pleased with being soothed  
    Into a sweet half-sleep,  
Three times his kingly beard he  
    smoothed  
And made him viceroy o'er his sheep.

His words were simple words enough  
    And yet he used them so,  
That what in other mouths were rough  
In his seemed musical and low.

Men called him but a shiftless youth,  
    In whom no good they saw ;  
And yet, unwittingly, in truth,  
They made his careless words their law.

They knew not how he learned at all,  
    For, long hour after hour,  
He sat and watched the dead leaves fall,  
Or mused upon a common flower.



## King Admetus ❀

It seemed the loveliness of things  
    Did teach him all their use,  
For, in mere weeds, and stones, and  
    springs,  
He found a healing power profuse.

Men granted that his speech was wise,  
    But, when a glance they caught  
Of his slim grace and woman's eyes,  
They laughed, and called him good-  
    for-naught.

Yet after he was dead and gone,  
    And e'en his memory dim,  
Earth seemed more sweet to live upon,  
More full of love, because of him.

And day by day more holy grew  
    Each spot where he had trod,  
Till after-poets only knew  
Their firstborn brother as a god.



## An Incident in a Railroad Car

**H**E spoke of Burns: men rude and  
rough

Pressed round to hear the praise of  
one

Whose breast was made of manly,  
simple stuff,

As homespun as their own.

And, when he read, they forward leaned

Drinking, with thirsty hearts and ears,

His brook-like songs whom glory never  
weaned

From humble smiles and tears.

Slowly there grew a tender awe,

Sunlike o'er faces brown and hard,

❁: An Incident in a

As if in him who read they felt and  
saw  
Some presence of the bard.

It was a sight for sin and wrong,  
And slavish tyranny to see,  
A sight to make our faith more pure  
and strong  
In high Humanity.

I thought, these men will carry hence,  
Promptings their former life above,  
And something of a finer reverence  
For beauty, truth, and love.

God scatters love on every side,  
Freely among his children all,  
And always hearts are lying open wide  
Wherein some grains may fall.

## Railroad Car ❀

There is no wind but soweth seeds  
Of a more true and open life,  
Which burst unlooked for into high-  
souled deeds  
With wayside beauty rife.

We find within these souls of ours  
Some wild germs of a higher birth,  
Which in the poet's tropic heart bears  
flowers  
Whose fragrance fills the earth.

Within the hearts of all men lie  
These promises of wider bliss,  
Which blossom into hopes that cannot  
die,  
In sunny hours like this.

All that hath been majestic  
In life or death since time began,

✽ An Incident in a

Is native in the simple heart of all,  
The angel heart of man.

And thus among the untaught poor  
Great deeds and feelings find a home  
That cast in shadow all the golden lore  
Of classic Greece or Rome.

Oh! mighty brother-soul of man,  
Where'er thou art, in low or high,  
Thy skyey arches with exulting span  
O'er-roof infinity.

All thoughts that mould the age begin  
Deep down within the primitive soul,  
And, from the many, slowly upward  
win  
To One who grasps the whole.

In his broad breast, the feeling deep  
That struggled on the many's tongue,

## Railroad Car ❁

Swells to a tide of Thought whose  
surges leap  
O'er the weak thrones of wrong.

All thought begins in feeling — wide  
In the great mass its base is hid,  
And, narrowing up to thought, stands  
glorified,  
A moveless pyramid.

Nor is he far astray who deems  
That every hope which rises and  
grows broad  
In the World's heart, by ordered im-  
pulse streams  
From the great heart of God.

God wills, man hopes ; in common  
souls  
Hope is but vague and undefined,

❁ An Incident in a

Till from the poet's tongue the message  
rolls,  
A blessing to his kind.

Never did poesy appear  
So full of Heav'n to me as when  
I saw how it would pierce through  
pride and fear,  
To the lives of coarsest men.

It may be glorious to write  
Thoughts that shall glad the two or  
three  
High souls, like those far stars that  
come in sight  
Once in a century.

But better far it is to speak  
One simple word which now and  
then



## Railroad Car ❁

Shall waken their free nature in the  
weak  
And friendless sons of men ;

To write some earnest verse or line  
Which, seeking not the praise of Art,  
Shall make a clearer faith and manhood  
shine  
In the uncultured heart.

He who doth this, in verse or prose,  
May be forgotten in his day,  
But surely shall be crowned at last with  
those  
Who live and speak for aye.



## A Reverie

**I**N the twilight deep and silent  
Comes thy spirit unto mine,  
When the starlight and the moonlight  
Over cliff and woodland shine.  
And the quiver of the river  
Seems a thrill of joy benign.

Then I rise and go in fancy  
To the headland by the sea,  
When the evening star throbs setting  
Through the dusky cedar-tree,  
And from under, low-voiced thunder  
From the surf swells fitfully.

Then within my soul I feel thee  
Like a gleam of bygone years,  
Visions of my childhood murmur

❧ A Reverie

Their old madness in my ears,  
Till the pleasance of thy presence  
Crowds my heart with blissful tears.

All the wondrous dreams of boyhood —  
All youth's fiery thirst of praise —  
All the surer hopes of manhood  
Blossoming in sadder days —  
Joys that bound me, griefs that crowned  
me

With a better wreath than bays —

All the longings after freedom —  
The vague love of human kind,  
Wandering far and near at random  
Like a dead leaf on the wind —  
Rousing only in the lonely  
Twilight of an aimless mind, —

All of these, oh best beloved,  
Happiest present dreams and past,

## A Reverie ❁

In thy love find safe fulfilment,  
Ripened into truths at last ;  
Faith and beauty, hope and duty  
To one centre gather fast.

How my spirit, like an ocean,  
At the breath of thine awakes,  
Leaps its shores in mad exulting  
And in foamy music breaks,  
Then downsinking, lieth shrinking  
At the tumult that it makes !

Blazing Hesperus hath sunken  
Low within the pale-blue west,  
And with blazing splendour crowneth  
The horizon's piny crest ;  
Thoughtful quiet stills the riot  
Of wild longing in my breast.

Home I loiter through the moonlight,  
Underneath the quivering trees,

❧ A Reverie

Which, as if a spirit stirred them,  
Sway and bend, till by degrees  
The far surge's murmur merges  
In the rustle of the breeze.

## Summer Storm

UNTREMULOUS in the river  
clear,  
Toward the sky's image, hangs the  
imaged bridge ;  
So still the air that I can hear  
The slender clarion of the 'unseen  
midge ;  
Out of the stillness, with a gathering  
creep,  
Like rising wind in leaves, which now  
decreases,  
Now lulls, now swells, and all the while  
increases,  
The huddling trample of a drove of  
sheep

❀ Summer Storm

Tilts the loose planks, and then as  
gradually ceases

In dust on the other side ; life's em-  
blem deep,

A confused noise between two silences,  
Finding at last in dust precarious peace.

On the wide marsh the purple-blos-  
somed grasses

Soak up the sunshine ; sleeps the  
brimming tide,

Save when the wedge-shaped wake in  
silence passes

Of some slow water-rat, whose  
sinuous glide

Wavers the long green sedge's shade  
from side to side ;

But up the west, like a rock-shivered  
surge,

Climbs a great cloud edged with sun-  
whitened spray ;



## Summer Storm ❁

Huge whirls of foam boil toppling o'er  
its verge,  
And falling still it seems, and yet it  
climbs away.

Suddenly all the sky is hid  
As with the shutting of a lid,  
One by one great drops are falling  
Doubtful and slow,  
Down the pane they are crookedly  
crawling  
And the wind breathes low ;  
Slowly the circles widen on the river,  
Widen and mingle, one and all ;  
Here and there the slenderer flowers  
shiver,  
Struck by an icy rain-drop's fall.

Now on the hills I hear the thunder mutter  
The wind is gathering in the west ;

❖ Summer Storm

The upturned leaves first whiten and  
flutter,

Then droop to a fitful rest ;

Up from the stream with sluggish flap  
Struggles the gull and floats away ;

Nearer and nearer rolls the thunder-  
clap, —

We shall not see the sun go down  
to-day :

Now leaps the wind on the sleepy marsh,  
And tramples the grass with terrified  
feet,

The startled river turns leaden and  
harsh,

You can hear the quick heart of the  
tempest beat.

Look ! look ! that livid flash !  
And instantly follows the rattling thun-  
der,

## Summer Storm ❧

As if some cloud-crag split asunder.  
Fell, splintering with a ruinous  
crash,  
On the Earth, which crouches in  
silence under ;  
And now a solid gray wall of rain  
Shuts off the landscape, mile by  
mile ;  
For a breath's space I see the blue  
wood again,  
And ere the next heart-beat, the wind-  
hurled pile,  
That seemed but now a league  
aloof,  
Bursts rattling o'er the sun-parched  
roof ;  
Against the windows the storm comes  
dashing,  
Through tattered foliage the hail tears  
crashing,

## ❖ Summer Storm

The blue lightning flashes,  
The rapid hail clashes,  
The white waves are tumbling,  
And in one baffled roar,  
Like the toothless sea mumbling  
A rock-bristled shore,  
The thunder is rumbling  
And crashing and crumbling, —  
Will silence return nevermore ?

Hush ! Still as death,  
The tempest holds his breath  
As from a sudden will ;  
The rain stops short, but from the eaves  
You see it drop, and hear it from the  
leaves,  
All is so bodingly still ;  
Again, now, now, again  
Plashes the rain in heavy gout,  
The crinkled lightning

## Summer Storm ❀

---

Seems ever brightening,  
And loud and long  
Again the thunder shouts  
His battle-song, —  
One quivering flash,  
One wildering crash,  
Followed by silence dead and dull,  
As if the cloud, let go,  
Leapt bodily below  
To whelm the earth in one mad over-  
throw,  
And then a total lull.

Gone, gone, so soon !  
No more my half-crazed fancy  
there,  
Can shape a giant in the air,  
No more I see his streaming hair,  
The writhing portent of his form ; —  
The pale and quiet moon

❧ Summer Storm

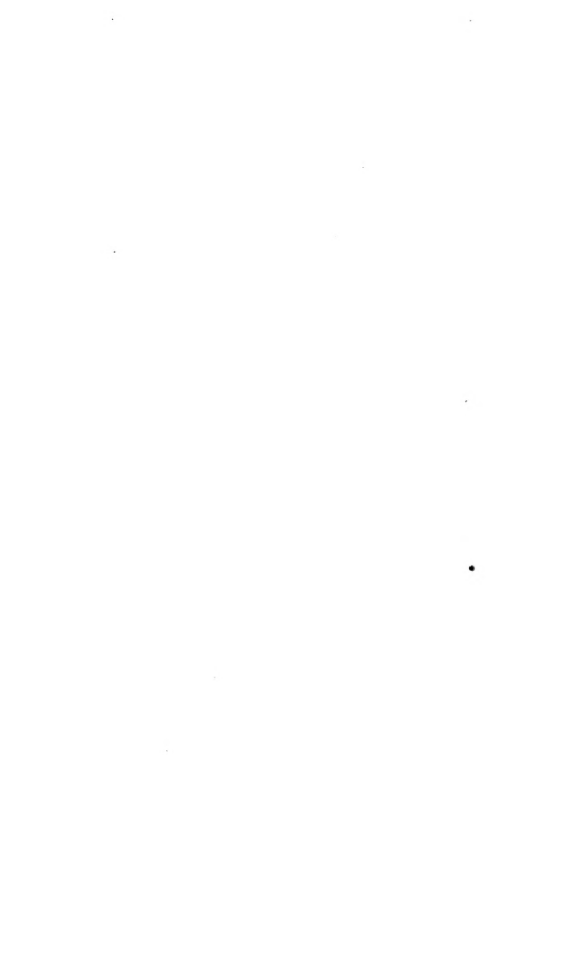
Makes her calm forehead bare,  
And the last fragments of the storm,  
Like shattered rigging from a fight at  
sea,  
Silent and few, are drifting over me.

THE END.













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